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# FIRST DELEGATION TO PARAGUAY

May 31 - June 10, 2009

*Explore the challenges  
facing new president  
Fernando Lugo.*



Fernando Lugo's triumph in the Paraguayan presidential election on April 20, 2008, is historic because it marks the end of the Colorado Party's hegemony after more than 60 years. Known as the "Bishop of the Poor" by his supporters and the "Red Bishop" by his right-wing opponents, Lugo formed a coalition made up of 10 political parties, mostly left or center-left, 20 social organizations, trade unions, small farmers and indigenous associations. The central theme of his campaign was poverty reduction and land reform. His agrarian reform policy was most significant because it addressed Paraguay's highly unequal distribution of land that, after Bolivia, is the second most unequal in Latin America, where 40% live in poverty and 20% in absolute poverty. 77% of the country's fertile land is controlled by one percent of the landowners. One of his first acts as president was to apologize in the name of the state to the victims of human rights violations during the 1954-1989 Stroessner dictatorship.

While Paraguay remained a backwater for most of the colonial period because of the absence of natural resources for international trade, now the country's enormous water resources are being coveted by transnational

corporations like Coca Cola and its hydro-electric power being generated by Itaipu plant 10 km north of Iguassu Falls currently provides cheap energy for Brazil and Argentina. The Guarani Aquifer, is one of the world's largest reserves of water.

In recent years the resistance to multinational agro-producers of soy like Monsanto, Dupont, Cargill, and ADM have led to



Silos of one of the large corporate soybean producers. Although exports have tripled since 2005, extreme poverty has increased.



Small farmers and their families have been literally poisoned off their lands by pesticides.

repression of social movements. Paraguay is the world's fourth largest exporter of soybeans, and every year more than 24 million liters of hazardous pesticides are sprayed on soy crops alone. Illness and deaths in communities located near the soy plantations have resulted in migration to cities without jobs to support the influx.

This delegation will meet with social movement leaders to explore the controversy around mono-crop soy production. In addition we'll talk to indigenous groups, small farmer associations, trade unionists and government officials to learn about the inequalities and corruption that the new president is facing. We hope to address the issues of US militarization (largest military base in Latin America) as well as the anti-terrorism law that criminalizes protest.

The \$1000 delegation fee (subject to change) will include itinerary, guides, housing, at least two meals a day, and in-country transportation. It does not include travel to and from Paraguay.

For more information and an application, contact: Dale Sorensen, 415/924-3227 or [geodale1@earthlink.net](mailto:geodale1@earthlink.net).